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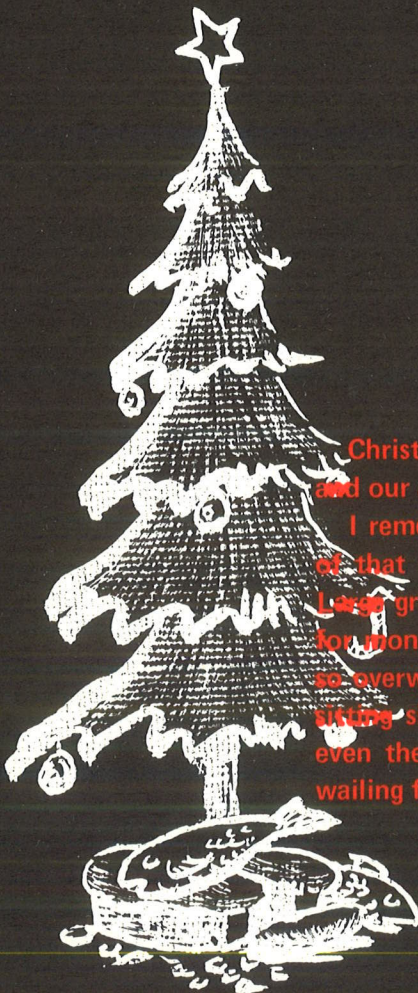
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MISSION

December, 1977

Of Loaves and Fishes and the Spirit of Christmas

By Dave Reagan



Christmas. The season to be jolly. The time when our tables are burdened and our appetites dulled with the abundance of rich foods.

I remember a Christmas when it was harder to be jolly. I recall the horror of that month-long season the year Christmas found us in the Philippines. Large groups of the poor would band together and walk door-to-door begging for money and food. At first, my wife and I tried to help. But we were soon so overwhelmed by the numbers and their misery that we finally resorted to sitting silently in our living room at night, with the lights turned off. And even then they continued to come, tapping on the windows and doors and wailing for food.

(Continued on page 3)

IN THE MARGINS

It's becoming clearer than ever that the issue of the role of women in the church is inseparably related to their role in a society where church folk have the vote. In this issue, Melvin Bobo argues that the "subjection" passages in the New Testament scriptures refer not to the church but to the home (p. 8). That distinction made me think of the huge women's meeting in Houston recently, attended by many women from Churches of Christ opposing the Equal Rights Amendment. They did so partly on the grounds that the ERA threatens biblical foundations of the family. Which raises the issue of how—or whether—to transfer the family structure of Bible days to society at large—Christian or not. Like all moral/political issues, this one will require open discussion and informed debate.

Hopefully we can deal with it *morally*, not *moralistically*—a distinction described in Perry Cotham's piece beginning on page 17. I've often winced at moral pronouncements in the political arena; and Cotham helps me understand why. The word "moralistic" has been like the word "pornography" to me. Just as the judge decided, when trying to distinguish porn from art, the precise distinction escapes me, but I know it when I see it. (There's more in Cotham's book, *Politics, Americanism, and Christianity*; and he's also in print on the other matter, *Obscenity, Pornography, and Censorship*. Both are from Baker Book House.)

If we get this issue to you by the 25th, Merry Christmas, especially through Dave Reagan's piece (p. 3), which should help us celebrate the rich gifts of the season more compassionately and thoughtfully. Dave's dynamic and informed preaching here at Central in Irving has challenged us to at least do more than merely *sing* about the season. The singing is important, of course; may you do your share of that, too.

RJ

"TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING . . . TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION . . . TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."

—EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

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Of Loaves . . . and Christmas

By DAVE REAGAN

(Continued from front cover)

All of us can probably remember when, as children, we were told that we should eat all the food on our plates because there were children starving in Asia or Africa or Latin America. For most of us, that admonition soon came to be recognized as nothing more than a parental ploy to get us to eat something we didn't like. We became insensitive to it, and in the process "the starving children of Asia, Africa, and Latin America" became a sort of tiresome joke.

Somehow that tiresome joke must be recognized for the living, stark reality that it actually is. For hunger, famine, and starvation are epidemic in our world.

Jesus prophesied that this would be the case. In Matthew 24 he stated that three key signs of the end of the age would be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, and famines. Further, he said that these would be like "birth pains"—that is, as the time for his return drew near, they would increase in both frequency and intensity.

In 1798, Thomas Robert Malthus, the clergyman-mathematician-demographer, wrote his great study of population. Malthus observed that man's numbers increase in a geometric progression (2, 4, 8, 16, etc.), whereas the food supply can increase only in an arithmetic progression (2, 4, 6, 8, etc.). Thus, Malthus concluded that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man." His gloomy conclusion: "Famine seems to be the last and the most dreadful resource of nature."

Like the prophecies of Jesus, the dire predictions of Malthus have come true before our very eyes. Since the time of Malthus, the world has experienced a population explosion of unparalleled dimensions—an explosion that would have been startling even to Malthus.

In March, 1976, the world's population reached four billion. It is increasing at the rate of 1.8 percent per year. That means 72 million additional mouths to feed every year, or nearly 200,000 *per day*! At this rate there will be five billion of us before 1990, and more than six billion by the turn of the century. There are,

in fact, more people alive on the earth right now than have lived on this planet in all of recorded time before the beginning of this century.

And they are hungry people. The simple facts are that 60 percent of the world are malnourished (2.4 billion), and 20 percent are literally starving to death (800 million).

Now, it is very difficult for you and me to comprehend the horror of these cold statistics. For after all, most of us are part of the white middle class of America, and we are therefore members of the most materially blessed class of people in the history of the Family of Man. The majority of the people in this country are below the age of 25, which means that most of this privileged white middle class have *never* known anything except plenty. The Great Depression of the 1930s is nothing more to them than a memory of their grandparents. It is therefore difficult for most of us to relate in any meaningful way to poverty in our own country, much less the totally abject poverty of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

For example, most of us would be startled to know that although we in the United States constitute only 6 percent of the world's population, we consume 40 percent of the world's goods. Startling, too, is the fact that we consume an average of four pounds of food per person each day, containing an average of 3,200 calories, whereas half of those living in the poverty stricken areas of our world struggle along on 1,900 calories per day while the other half consume less than 1,000.

Earned income in America last year averaged more than \$6,000 for every man, woman, and child, while those living in the world's hunger belt averaged less than \$200 each. The food scraps that you and I throw away—plus what we spend on pets, liquor, cigarettes, fad diets, beauty parlors, and amusements—would feed the world's hungry for a year. Again, it is very difficult for us to comprehend the problem of world hunger when one of the greatest health problems all of us face is over-eating and obesity.

I personally first began to develop some awareness about the problem of world poverty and hunger in the mid-'60s when I spent a year traveling all over Asia. Prior to that time, I suppose my only exposure to hard-core poverty had been a couple of fast drives through ghetto

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areas of New York and Boston and one quick visit to a Mexican border town. But these had not created any real consciousness within me of the true meaning of poverty and hunger.

The year in Asia took care of that. I witnessed people living in indescribable filth and squalor. I saw people fighting with each other and with dogs for morsels of meat in a garbage dump. I remember having to roll up the windows of an un-air-conditioned car and lock the doors every time we stopped at a red light in Manila because the car would be immediately surrounded by starving street urchins with running sores who would beat on the windows, begging for money or a stick of chewing gum.

And during a year's teaching appointment in the Philippines, the memory of the bands of the poor at our door that Christmas was etched unforgettably in my memory.

It was during this time that I became aware of the relativity of poverty. By this I mean that I came to the realization that the poorest family in our society is well off compared to the poor of, say, the Philippines.

For example, our poorest families will often have a radio, a television, an old car, a run-down shack of a house or a tenement apartment. None of these things—*none* of them—would the poor Filipino ever expect to have. A wrist watch, a radio, a TV set, or a car are all beyond his wildest imagination. His "home" is most likely to be a squatter's hut made either of thatch or pieced-together wooden crates he has stolen from the docks. And his home will not have any electricity or running water. Nor will the Filipino have any food stamps, rent subsidy, unemployment insurance, or social security. These things just don't exist.

And yet, the Filipino is "well-off" compared to the poor of India. I have never been to Calcutta, but I have talked to people who have experienced its horror, and I have read United Nations reports about its level of poverty. The UN estimates that 200,000 people in that city sleep in the streets every night. They don't even have a box to crawl into! Every morning the first order of business is to collect the dead so that the traffic can start moving again.

But in making these comparisons, I don't want to downplay our own poor in this country. Yes, in many ways they are better off than the poor of Asia and Africa and Latin America, but they are still poor and hungry. What's more, they have a greater consciousness of their poverty. You see, it is one thing to be hungry and assume that all the world shares

your fate. It is a totally different thing to be hungry in the midst of plenty and to turn on a TV set and be told that your life will be miserable if you don't start the day with a bowl of Wheaties or if you don't top off your lunch at MacDonald's with a hot fried pie. The poor of our country have their noses rubbed in their poverty.

And yes, we have poor people in our country who are hungry. It is estimated that 24.3 million Americans cannot afford the necessities of life, and many of these throw away what little money they have on "junk food" due to the influence of advertising. Approximately one million Americans consume pet food as a significant part of their diets.

Nor is this just a problem of New York or Chicago or Los Angeles. Texas—the land of oil wells and cattle and instant millionaires—has more poverty level families than any other state in the nation (yes, even more than Mississippi!). This situation is due to the large Mexican-American population which lives in abject poverty.

But the problem in Texas is not confined to the Rio Grande border. People are hungry in Dallas County. In the last twelve months 170,000 persons received emergency food from 28 public agencies in Dallas County, and this does not include federal assistance through programs like food stamps. It also does not include assistance from private agencies like churches. Think of it!—170,000 people in Dallas County receiving emergency food valued at more than \$800,000! In thriving, growing, affluent Dallas County, people are hungry.

How is a Christian to respond to all this? Despair? Hopelessness? Concern? Prayer? It is my personal conviction that the New Testament teaches that Christians must *do* something about poverty and hunger, to do *something* no matter how insignificant it may seem to us in comparison to the enormity of the problem.

Our Christian commitment compels us to act because Jesus, our example in all things, acted on the problem. Jesus was a healer of both bodies and souls. The very essence of his life was summed up in the marvelous passage from Isaiah which he read in the synagogue in Galilee at the beginning of his ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.
The Spirit has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim freedom for prisoners,

to recover sight for the blind,
and to release the oppressed.

(Luke 4:18ff.)

Jesus ministered to the *whole* person. In the prayer he taught his disciples, he prayed first for daily bread before he prayed for forgiveness of sins. Everywhere he went, he healed the sick, fed the hungry, raised the dead, cast out demons, and wiped away the tears of the sorrowful. It is interesting to note that the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels is his feeding of the 5,000.

We, as followers of Jesus, must likewise be concerned about the whole person, and we must be concerned to the point of action. Passive resignation or mere intellectual concern are just not valid options for the Christian. That is why everywhere Christianity has spread it has established hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, leper colonies, and soup kitchens.

As Christians, we are called to be compassionate. The Scriptures do not teach that we must live in poverty, but they do teach that we are to be concerned for the poor and that we are to express that concern by sharing our resources with them (Matt. 25:31-46; James 1:27; 2:14-17). Consider for example, the story of the rich man in Luke 12 who had such abundant harvests that he had to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to hold his crops. God labeled him a "fool" and took his life. It just never occurred to the man that he should share his wealth.

Or consider the story of the little tax collector, Zacchaeus. When Jesus touched his life, he immediately proclaimed: "Look, Lord! Here and now I will give half my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8). Zacchaeus got the message of what Christianity was all about.

There are, of course, many ways Christians can respond individually and collectively to the problem of hunger. Soup kitchens and Christmas baskets are two of the most common.

I'd like to call your attention to another way in which you and your congregation can create hunger awareness and then do something about it. It's called the "Love Loaf" program.

This program has been developed by a pioneering Christian organization called World Vision International (919 West Huntington Drive, Monrovia, California 91016). The organization is headed by Stan Mooneyham, author of the best-selling book, *What Do You*

Say to a Hungry World? World Vision is feeding people in the name of Jesus in forty-three countries around the world. During the past three years, World Vision invested more than \$43.9 million in its poverty ministries (while its overhead averaged only 17 percent). This past year their programs have expanded 25 percent to a total of \$25 million.

Their technique for fund raising is very simple and effective. They supply the local congregation with a "Love Loaf" for each family and single member. The "Love Loaf" is a small, plastic piggy bank shaped like a loaf of bread. The insignia of the fish is inscribed on its top around the money slot. The loaf is thus a reminder of the miracle that Jesus performed with the loaves and fishes.

Each family and single member of the congregation takes a "Love Loaf" home and places it on their dining room table. Then, for the next six to eight weeks, the family members, from the youngest to the oldest, drop money in the loaf which they have saved by skipping all or part of a meal, or by skipping a usual treat between meals. The loaf is a constant reminder of our blessings of abundance in the midst of world hunger. It provides an opportunity to teach younger children a lesson of compassion. It provides motivation for Christian self-discipline in eating and fasting. We ordered enough Love Loaves for each family to have one; but the response from visitors and others was so positive that we had to order forty more.

At the end of a prescribed period of time, usually about six to eight weeks, the loaves are brought to a Sunday morning worship service where they are dedicated to the Lord in prayer and broken open. A minimum of forty percent of the proceeds must be sent to World Vision International. The remainder can be retained by the local congregation for hunger programs of its own design and purpose. The money sent to World Vision can be earmarked for any of their specific programs. For example, my congregation specified that the money it sent be used for World Vision's clinic in Gambia, West Africa which is designed to feed children under the age of five.

Hunger is a very significant social and human problem—both domestically and internationally. We as Christians need to do something about it, however insignificant what we do may seem to us.

He who shuts his ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in his own time of need (Prov. 21:13).

†

From the Back Pew

By Dave Wimbish

Would You Quote that Quota Again, Please?

The Rev. Levi Flipflops (not to be confused with Levi Sandals), minister of the church I attend—during the off-season and when it's not too hot or cold or the wind's not blowing—recently asked me to accompany him on a trip to Washington.

Occasion of the trip was a letter from Byron P. O'Selznix, who is chairman of the National Bureau of Quotas, Quorums, and Quality Control. O'Selznix had hinted rather strongly in his letter that there were some problems with "balance" in our church membership.

Brother Flipflops, or so it seemed, had preached directly at me for the last thirty-six Sundays in a row—not counting the times I missed services when (a) my pet rhinoceros died; (b) I brushed my teeth too hard and made my gums bleed; and (c) my hair hurt—and so I was especially pleased that he had obviously repented and asked me to accompany him on this trip. I didn't even mind that he asked me to wear blackface.

We found Mr. O'Selznix to be an extremely nervous, tall, thin, white man. With an Afro. He was eating a taco topped with spaghetti sauce and a side order of Polish sausage. He was attired in a beautiful daishiki with a large Indian turquoise necklace hanging around his neck.

"Come in, come in," he said, in a thick German accent. "Let me turn this stereo down. I was just enjoying a little music. What a great record this is! *The Supremes and The Four Tops Meet the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Bobby Vinton.*"

"I'm Levi Flipflops and this is one of the members

of my church, Dave Wimbish."

"It's not your church," I protested. "It's the Lord's."

"Yes, yes, Rev. Flipflops, I've been expecting you."

"Don't call him reverend," I screamed.

"Now, Dave, just settle down. I'll give him a tract later. Go ahead, sir."

"Well, it was nice of you to bring this poor fellow along, but it won't do you any good. We don't have any quotas for ugly people."

"But he's emotionally immature as well—not to mention that he is full of sour grapes and dyspepsia."

"I'm sorry, but this is the department of QQQ. If you want any points for this turkey, you'll have to go across the street to the FBI and turn him in for being a federal nuisance. Now, to the point..... why don't you have any Eskimos in your church?"

"Eskimos!? Doggone it, Dave. I knew you should have worn that parka."

"Rev. Flipflops, my records indicate that the United States population includes .002 percent Catholic Eskimos."

"We've tried to convert some Eskimos in our neighborhood, but"

O'Selznix pulled a thick notebook out of a desk drawer. "Rev. Flipflops, my records also indicate that you do not have any Catholic members of your church."

Brinnnnng! The phone rang.

"Hello . . . fine Yes, the Harlem Globetrotters? Fine, Mr. Lemon, fine, and how are you? . . . Oh, really? . . . Well, I'm sorry the letter upset you, Mr. Lemon, but we must have equal rights in this country. I'm sorry, Mr. Lemon, but 85 percent of the American

population is white, and it's only right, then, that your basketball team be made up 85 percent of white players Yes, yes, I know that, Mr. Lemon. Well, have you ever thought of going to medical school? We have a lot of openings for"

"How about that guy!? He hung up on me! Now where was I . . . oh yes . . . do you expect me to believe you can't find any Eskimos who are dying to be members of your church?"

"Well, we had a Filippino once, but . . ."

Brinnnnng! The phone again.

"QQQ. Yes, yes, and how are you, Mr. Grand Hepzibah? Just in from a cross-burning and a black-baiting session, huh? Oh, black-*beating*. I see . . . Sounds like fun. A big lynching for Saturday? . . . You guys are a laugh a minute! However, I have some bad news. Our records indicate that your club is overloaded with WASPs No, not that kind of wasp, I mean white Anglo-Saxon Protestants Anglo-Saxon, you know . . . English I know you're 100 percent American, but What I'm trying to tell you is that unless you boys take in a few niggrahs and kikes you're going to get in trouble. Fun is fun, but don't go trying to buck the American quota system!"

Click!

"Now see here, Reverend, don't you understand that if we let you get away with not having any Eskimos in your church, it's going to set back racial relations in this country fifty years?! What will we say to South Africa, when they point out to us that the Antelope Toes, New Jersey, Church of Christ doesn't have one Eskimo member? Don't forget, this is the land of opportunity! And if you don't have room for any new members, then make room for the Eskimos by excommunicating a few Wasps, or whatever it is you Protestant, fundamentalist-type crazies call giving someone the boot. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must go.

"I have a meeting scheduled with Muhammed Ali. It's been a long time since he's beaten up a white man, and the government cannot tolerate this kind of racism. We will be keeping an eye on your church, Rev. Flipflops."

So this is being filed from Wainwright, Alaska, where it's Eskimo conversion time. Levi and I are doing pretty well in our talks with them. The only problem is that every time we get to the part about baptism, they look at the icicles hanging in the windows, and start insisting they can be saved by faith alone.

†

CORRECTION

. . . upon seeing my middle initial misprinted

Like a drop of cold rain in the eye
It leapt out at me—
A "G." instead of a "D."

A sharp, spontaneous blow
To the pride of me,
That "G." instead of a "D."

It sneaked in beneath my defenses
And made my priorities clear;
It fractured my fondest pretenses
That of oblivion I harbor no fear.

But I'm thankful to an all-wise Lord
For distracting the editor's eye;
The misprint is His subtle word
That narcissus is always nigh.

—Elton D. Higgs, with
regrets from the editor

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (s) Ron Durham

Males and Husbands, Women and Wives

By MELVIN BOBO

The question of women's place in the church is inseparable from the question of subordination. All Christians are to be subject to each other (Eph. 5:21). But what did Paul mean when he said that women in particular "should be subordinate" (1 Cor. 14:34)? Were they to be subject to all men in general, or only to their own husbands?

In the Greek Bible, the words *anthropos* and *aner* are both translated "man." *Anthropos* usually describes man as opposed to animal—the human race—although it can mean specifically "male." *Aner* means an adult male as opposed to a boy; a man as opposed to a woman; or a husband. Likewise, the Greek word *gyne* can mean either woman or wife.

The word "husband" (or husbands) appears forty-four times in the King James Version, according to Cruden's Concordance. Each time, the word is from *aner*—never *anthropos*. Likewise, each time the word "wife" appears, it is from *gyne*. We may conclude that these should be the preferred translations when it does not contradict reasonable understanding, or violate the context. And when the context concerns family affairs, "husband" and "wife" are clearly preferable over "man" and "woman."

The following quotation from 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 shows this passage's use of these two words:

The women (from *gyne*) should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands (*aner*) at home. For it is shameful for a woman (*gyne*) to speak in church.

Again, it is instructive to look at the root words behind Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:1-15:

An elder at the Norwood Church of Christ in Cincinnati, Ohio, Melvin Bobo originally wrote this article in response to a need for the study of the role of women in his own congregation.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men (*anthropos*), for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men (*anthropos*) to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men (*anthropos*), the man (*anthropos*) Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

I desire then that in every place the men (*aner*) should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; also that women (*gyne*) should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women (*gyne*) who profess religion. Let a woman (*gyne*) learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman (*gyne*) to teach or to have authority over men (*aner*); she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman (*gyne*) was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman (*gyne*) will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

Note that Paul first speaks about man in general—*anthropos*. But in verse 8 he changes to *aner*. The context concerns Adam and his wife, and speaks of childbearing. The translation of *gyne* and *aner* as wife and husband is in complete harmony with the context in both references.

Turning to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and applying the same translation principle, we have:

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I

have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man (*aner*) is Christ, the head of a woman (*gyne*) is her husband (*aner*), and the head of Christ is God. Any man (*aner*) who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman (*gyne*) who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman (*gyne*) will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman (*gyne*) to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. For a man (*aner*) ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman (*gyne*) is the glory of man (*aner*). (For man [*aner*] was not made from woman [*gyne*], but woman [*gyne*] from man [*aner*]. Neither was man [*aner*] created for woman [*gyne*], but woman [*gyne*] for man [*aner*].) That is why a woman (*gyne*) ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels. (Nevertheless, in the Lord woman [*gyne*] is not independent of man [*aner*] nor man [*aner*] of woman [*gyne*]; for as woman [*gyne*] was made from man [*aner*], so man [*aner*] is now born of woman [*gyne*]. And all things are from God.) Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman (*gyne*) to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that for a man (*aner*) to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman (*gyne*) has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.

In each of these three references there is a common theme. Great liberties appear to have been given to the women in the early church. Paul was making the point that even though, in Christ and the church, they stood on an equal basis with men, this did not change their basic responsibility to show reverence and respect to their husbands. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul was not condemning the women for praying and prophesying. He was only reminding them that they should not do so in a manner which showed disrespect to their husbands—that is, their “head.”

We are not familiar enough with the custom of the time to make any final commentary. A modern parallel might be a wife who would choose not to wear her wedding band and thus show disrespect for her husband. There are both ancient and modern cultures in which the covering of the head symbolizes a married woman. Probably this was the case here.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul is giving instructions for a very specific situation—the demeanor of Christians at services where spiritual gifts were being manifested. In certain circumstances men were told

to be silent (vs. 28). Likewise, in this same situation wives were told to be silent; if they had questions, they were to ask their *husbands* at home.

In many passages relative to the Jewish synagogue, terms like “argue” and “debate” are used repeatedly. Women in the synagogue were not permitted to participate in these arguments. Some commentators have suggested that the meaning of this verse was that wives in the audience were not allowed to challenge their husbands while they were speaking in public. They were to ask their questions at home. Others have suggested that, in the services where spiritual gifts were being used, women were not permitted to enter into the discussion at all.

Regardless as to the true interpretation, the conditions for which Paul was prescribing regulations do not exist in the church today. It would be straining the instructions to use them out of context to apply to all worship services of the church where spiritual gifts were not being manifested.

In 1 Timothy 2, these same general thoughts are prevalent. Paul speaks about the proper relationship between husbands and wives. There are no details about the problem at hand. It may be suggested here, as in 1 Corinthians 14, that wives were challenging their husbands in public meeting. Hence, Paul instructed them not to teach or usurp authority over their husbands.

A further study of these three passages shows that Paul does not base his argument on the new revelation of a new relationship and practice for the Christian age. Instead, he argues in two of these passages on the basis of the creation of Adam and Eve, and upon events surrounding their disobedience to God. In the third case, 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35, the argument is based on the teaching of “the law.” Which law is not specified, but it is probably the Law of Moses. The point is that in each of these instances Paul bases his argument on the relationship between Adam and his wife, Eve.

Paul seems to argue as follows, from Genesis 2: 18ff.—(1) God created man first, then woman to be a suitable help for him (Gen. 2:18). (2) God established the husband to have rule over the wife (3: 16). (3) God established that a major responsibility of the wives was to bear children (3:16). (4) God established that a major responsibility of the husband was to be the provider for the family (3:19).

The apostle enunciates these ancient principles for the Christian age in this way: “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). “If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). “Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues

in faith and love and holiness, with modesty" (1 Tim. 2:15).

The apostle Peter also told wives to be subject to their husbands (1 Pet. 3:1-7). Like Paul, Peter uses an ancient example ("Sarah obeyed Abraham") to establish his point. Note also that the woman was to be in subjection to her husband whether he was a Christian or not (3:1), pointing out again the universality of this principle. The relationship of Sarah to Abraham was commended to Christian wives as a relationship approved of God. Since the principle of subjection of the wives to husbands was a principle established and approved of God for all of the descendants of Adam and Eve, it applies with equal force on *all* people at *all* times.

As recommended by Peter we now look to three holy women of old for godly examples for Christian women. First, consider *Deborah*. This noble woman held a unique spot in the history of Israel. She was a prophetess, a married woman, and the only woman judge over Israel (Judg. 4:4-24). When Israel was threatened by the army of Jabin, king of Canaan, Deborah called Barak and told him of God's command for him to raise an army to defend Israel. Barak in the end did God's bidding, but only after much effort on Deborah's part in encouraging, bolstering, and instructing him. Finally, Barak would go into battle only if Deborah went with him, which she did.

The story of *Huldah* is in 2 Chronicles 34:14-33. During the reign of Josiah, a great revival was instituted. The temple had fallen into disuse and disrepair. Even the book of the Law was lost. When Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law, portions were read to the king and he became very disturbed. He sent the high priest and others to Huldah the prophetess to inquire of statements found in the book of the Law. She instructed the men that came to her and also advised King Josiah.

When Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant, Luke takes note of *Anna*, a prophetess of great age who continually served God in the temple with fastings and prayers (Luke 2:36-38). When she saw Jesus she gave thanks to God and spoke of Jesus to "all that look for redemption in Jerusalem."

All these women were, or had been, married. Deborah held the most responsible office in the land, yet she was the wife of Lapidoth (Judg. 4:4). Huldah instructed the high priest of Israel and was held in high respect by King Josiah, yet she was the wife of Shallum (2 Chron. 34:22). Anna had lived for seven years with a husband before being widowed (Luke 2:36-37). Yet her work as a prophetess was obviously a public ministry. In fact, all these women were called prophetesses, all worked publicly, and all taught or exercised authority over men. Since they were under the direction of the Holy Spirit, their public ministry was not in con-

flict with God's law that wives should be in subjection to their husbands.

We should also note that these women's work was not exclusively with other women. Although they lived in a male-dominated society, they engaged in business, in government, and in religion. In a sense, they were special women, in that the Holy Spirit guided them. Yet the Spirit did not make special laws regarding their relationship to men. These women exercised leadership roles over men, in perfect harmony with the law of God.

But what about women under the New Covenant? Were there prophetesses in the early church? There were. Were these women also under the ancient law of subjection to their husbands? They were. Yet, on the day of Pentecost, Peter said that the presence of prophets and prophetesses was evidence of the fulfillment of God's promises through Joel that "your sons *and your daughters* shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). God could have limited the outpouring of his Spirit to "your sons" had he desired. But he desired to give the prophetic Spirit to "*all flesh*," both sons and daughters.

What about the church today? We Christians all have the gift of God's Spirit, we are all guided through his revealed word. We can all prophesy in a sense, and we all have the responsibility to teach the word. We are all in Christ, where "there is neither Jew nor Greek. . . slave nor free, . . . male nor female" (Gal. 3:28).

I believe that the church has grown considerably toward Paul's goal in this passage. I perceive growth even in my lifetime. The perception that the gospel is for all without discrimination against status or wealth or race is held by all, at least in theory if not in practice. The statement that there is neither male nor female causes us more difficulty. We have a multitude of unwritten rules and customs which result in restricting without biblical authority the liberty which God has given to all his children and heirs of Abraham.

We are reluctant to press this principle of liberty because we do not wish to offend anyone. We wish to live in harmony and peace. But would we, for the sake of peace, make rules that would restrict the freedom of Gentiles in relation to Jews? Paul would not. He jealously guarded this freedom, even against the practice of a fellow apostle (Gal. 1-2). How, then, can we place restraints on women which God intended to be applied only in relation to their own husbands? I am persuaded that God will not find us guiltless if, for expediency's sake, we make rules that prevent women from living a full and productive Christian life; and if we drive from the church those women who seek their Christian liberty. †

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Alcoholism: the Growing Threat

By E. WAYNE MASSEY, M.D., with the Editor

Once again, the "Christmas spirits" are upon us. The increased consumption of alcoholic beverages will make alcoholism, one of the nation's chronic maladies, more acute.

Because this problem is on the rise, a knowledge of alcoholism has never been so important. Because alcohol excess affects persons physically, spiritually, mentally, domestically, economically, socially, legally, and professionally, it concerns all Christians concerned about the whole person. And because alcoholism is a family problem, affecting everyone closely tied to the alcoholic, it is an issue of crucial importance to churches interested in ministering to families.

There are some 9 to 9.5 million alcoholics in the United States today. Despite a number of treatment programs, that number is growing—both here and abroad. And of course the problems caused by alcoholism touch the lives of many more than the millions who are personally in its grip.

It is not enough to leave the detection and cure of the alcoholic to the field of medicine or psychology. Physicians, those who should know and understand all common diseases, have been found lacking in knowledge about the problem. This inadequacy has forced medical schools to give increased attention to the problem; the entire populace must also be alerted.

Ministers, counselors, physicians, friends, family members—all should become aware of the signs and symptoms, the possible causes and treatment, of alcoholism. To fail to confront one's friend, associate, marriage partner, or patient about excessive drinking is not simply to fail "society"; it is to fail the alcoholic himself.

THE 'WHY' OF ALCOHOLISM

There are several possible reasons for the increased incidence of alcoholism. Prominent among these must be the change in social attitudes toward

alcohol. Formerly, religious teachings not only emphasized the evils of drunkenness; many Protestants advocated total abstinence. The weakening of this stand, combined with the affluence of our society in recent years, has had its effect on alcohol abuse.

Other reasons for alcoholism are hinted at by noting its victims. What kind of people become alcoholics? The most recent class consists of adolescents. There is a marked and tragic increase in "teenage bottle babies" or juvenile alcoholics. Various reasons can be cited: the lowering of the legal drinking age, parental acceptance of alcohol, peer group pressure, the use of drugs which create an emotional or physical invitation to alcohol as well.

Alcoholism occurs among those with physical and mental problems. There is a higher incidence among people with some diseases, such as Huntington's chorea. Alcoholism occurs in the chronic schizophrenic patient. It is not uncommon for patients using alcohol as medication to have an underlying psychiatric disorder uncovered when they "dry out" at a detoxification center or hospital.

Of course depression also can lead to alcoholism, in the attempt to blot out tensions, frustrations, rejection, and loss. Alcoholism occurs with hysteria. It is used by some as a means of controlling or manipulating others. It occurs with severe marital or family problems, often becoming such a focal point that it "relieves" a couple from having to face the more basic marriage problem.

Alcoholism occurs in "normals," where no obvious physical or psychological problem can be identified. Drinking may be a part of one's job initially, with physical dependence eventually developing. Or one may begin drinking during a crisis, with dependence continuing after the crisis is resolved.

To really determine psychopathology in the alcoholic, it is first necessary for him to stop drinking and maintain sobriety. This is because many alcoholics exhibit psychological difficulties—depression, sexual problems, etc.—while under the influence of alcohol. However, this may only be the result of physical toxicity rather than an underlying psychiatric disorder. It may require six to eight

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weeks of sobriety before possible psychological disorders can be adequately diagnosed.

DISCERNING THE SIGNS

Although some symptoms of alcoholism are a matter of general knowledge, early signs may not be immediately obvious to the alcoholic himself nor those close to him. Tables I and II can provide some objectivity in recognizing symptoms. Even physicians, ministers, and counselors tend to be more familiar with the physical symptoms of "end-stage" alcoholism, the conditions that form the basis of the stereotyped alcoholic.

The more obvious symptoms, however, account for only 5 percent of the alcoholic population. Furthermore, end-stage alcoholics are difficult to treat—often incurable. By then they have often lost their family and their job. They may be immersed in physical and legal difficulties and have little positive outlook. Unless those close to the budding alcoholic can detect the disorder at an earlier stage, many cases must be compared to malignant cancer patients who were without the benefit of early detection and treatment.

Early recognition of alcoholism is also important because of the way in which the body's cells develop tolerance to alcohol after repeated doses. Increased tolerance, of course, leads to increased consumption, and the cycle progresses viciously.

Table III correlates stages of intoxication with various levels of alcoholic content in the blood. Sustained high blood levels of alcohol leads to physical disease. This is even more likely when nutritional deficiency results from excessive drinking. Again, it is the body's capacity for increased tolerance of alcohol that allows for such sustained high levels. Thus, an automobile can be driven by an alcoholic with an alcohol content in his blood which would render an average person unconscious.

TRACING TRENDS

The "etiology" or root cause of alcoholism, is largely unknown—despite the generalizations above about the reasons some people succumb to the malady. In fact, the problem may well be called "alcoholisms," since a variety of circumstances seem to contribute to causative trends and patterns. There is a genetic component in some people, especially among American Indians, who as a group have lower tolerance to alcohol. There are certain family groupings which have a higher incidence of alcoholism, much as some strains of laboratory rats prefer alcohol over water. There is a higher rate of alcoholism among identical twins.

Children apparently sometimes learn to be alcoholics through a kind of positive reinforcement process in which parents "teach" the problem. After all, children see their parents drink as a conditioning agent. Sometimes it seems to calm them

or, on the other hand, to give them a burst of added energy. Negative causes can also be traced: people have become problem drinkers because of a deprived childhood, the need for oral gratification, or personal or family problems.

Other generalizations can be made which also indicate the diversity of causes. The ghetto turns people to alcohol in their attempt to flee the pain of poverty, while the affluent suburb or "golden ghetto" incites heavy drinking as a flight from boredom. Teenagers may drink to express rebellion. Some studies among American Indians and other displaced ethnic groups cite a people's loss of identity as a cause of alcohol abuse. Obviously the uniqueness of persons, their backgrounds, and environments must be considered in the search for causes.

WHAT ABOUT TREATMENT?

The relatively recent trend to regard alcoholism as a disease has been challenged on the grounds that it is thereby made more respectable and that the moral dimension is ignored. It must be admitted, however, that giving alcoholism the "status" of a disease has increased the availability of treatment. The American College of Physicians and Surgeons has listed it as a disease, and physicians can now work in the field with the approval of their peers. The government is also providing funds for the care of alcoholics, making available treatment which would not be possible if it were only considered a moral issue instead of a health problem.

Because alcoholism is a tremendous drain on manpower, industries are setting up mandatory treatment programs for alcoholic employees (see Table IV). The military has similar programs designed to return alcoholics to active duty. Some state governments require people involved in highway accidents due to drunken driving to enter treatment programs—and a decreased accident rate is reported from these states. Airlines are rehiring pilots who complete rehabilitation programs after being discharged because of alcohol abuse. The knowledge of the availability of help toward a brighter future can encourage the problem drinker to seek aid.

Christians with friends or family members with drinking problems should be aware of medical treatment currently in use. Disulfuram (Antabuse) is one medication prescribed for those afraid of their impulse to drink. With the support of an understanding physician, this treatment often enables problem drinkers to renew and maintain their resolution to abstain. The drug is taken in the morning, producing sickness if alcohol is taken within two or three days. As a general rule, it is poor medical practice to use tranquilizers or sedatives (i.e., valium or thorazine librium) regularly.

A major method of treatment is social support

and encouragement. The most adequate and consistent source of this type of therapy in our society is Alcoholics Anonymous. The success rate of this group of reformed alcoholics far exceeds most medical treatment facilities. The Christian physician, friend, or minister-counselor should know the AA group in his community. Local chapters are glad to provide information about their theory, methods, and scope of treatment. Serious non-alcoholic guests may usually visit their meetings. Supporting AA in many communities are "Al-Anon" groups which provide information and support for the families of alcoholics. (See Table V.)

SUMMARY: WHAT CHRISTIANS CAN DO

The Christian's role in helping the alcoholic is at least fourfold:

(1) Recognizing symptoms and signs of alcoholism as early as possible.

(2) Being willing to confront the alcoholic about the problem. This is rarely easy; but most reformed alcoholics attest that if friends or relatives had confronted them earlier they may have stopped sooner.

(3) Helping the family of the alcoholic.*

(4) Referring the problem drinker who is willing to be helped to AA or other treatment/educational programs. Counseling should be evaluated on the pragmatic basis of results. When it is inadequate, more competent and specialized help should be sought. When the alcoholic problem is recognized early, ministerial counsel can be adequate and should be feared by neither the patient nor the counselor. In fact, this approach often produces the best and most lasting results.

The most important point to remember is the urgency of intercepting the progression of alcoholism at an early stage. It is a serious problem, and a common problem; the Christian should be attuned to it and unafraid to confront it.

*Two booklets are especially recommended: "Guide for the Family of the Alcoholic," by Joseph L. Kellerman (Kemper Insurance Companies, Long Grove, Illinois 60049); and "Alcoholism, the Family Disease," Al-Anon Family Group pamphlet (Al-Anon, P. O. Box 182, Madison Square Station, New York, New York 10010).

TABLE I—*Drinking Behavior*

Early Phase:

- Drinks to relieve tension
- Alcohol tolerance increases
- Blackouts (memory blanks)
- Lies about drinking habits

Middle Phase:

- Surreptitious drinks
- Guilt about drinking
- Tremors during hangovers
- Loss of interest

Late Middle Phase:

- Avoids discussion of problem
- Fails in efforts at control
- Neglects food
- Prefers to drink alone

Late Phase:

- Believes that other activities interfere with his drinking

TABLE II—*Visible Signs*

Early Phase:

Attendance

- Late (after lunch)
- Leaves job early
- Absent from office

General Behavior

- Fellow workers complain
- Overreacts to real or imagined criticism
- Complains of not feeling well
- Lies

Job Performance

- Misses deadlines
- Mistakes through inattention or poor judgment
- Decreased efficiency

Middle Phase:

Attendance

- Frequent days off for vague or implausible reasons

Spasmodic work pace

- Attention wanders, lack of concentration

Late Middle Phase:

Attendance

- Frequent time off, sometimes for several days
- Fails to return from lunch

General Behavior

- Grandiose, aggressive, or belligerent
- Domestic problems interfere with work
- Apparent loss of ethical values
- Money problems
- Hospitalization increases
- Refuses to discuss problems
- Trouble with the law

Job Performance

- Far below expected level

Late Phase:

Attendance

- Prolonged unpredictable absences

General Behavior

- Drinking on job
- Totally undependable
- Repeated hospitalization
- Visible physical deterioration
- Money problems worse
- Serious family problems and/or divorce

Job Performance

- Uneven and generally incompetent

General Behavior

- Statements become undependable
- Begins to avoid associates
- Borrows money from co-workers
- Exaggerates work accomplishments
- Hospitalized more than average
- Repeated minor injuries on and off job
- Unreasonable resentment

Job Performance

- General deterioration

TABLE III— *A scale of toxic symptoms*

Alcohol in the blood mg. %	Subjective states and observable changes in behavior under conditions of heavy social drinking
10	Clearing of the head. Freer breathing through nasal passages. Mild tingling of the mucous membranes of the mouth and throat.
20	Slight fullness and mild throbbing at back of head. Touch of dizziness. Sense of warmth and general physical well-being. Small bodily aches and fatigue relieved. Not fretful about the weather nor worried concerning personal appearance. Quite willing to talk with associates. Feeling tone of pleasantness.
30	Mild euphoria, "everything is all right," "very glad I came," "we will always be friends," "sure I will lend you some money," "it isn't time to go home yet." No sense of worry. Feelings of superiority. Time passes quickly.
40	Lots of energy for the things he wants to do. Talks much and rather loudly. Hands tremble slightly, reaching and other movements a bit clumsy; laughs loudly at minor jokes; unembarrassed by mishaps. "You don't think I'm drunk, do you? Why, I haven't taken anything yet." Makes glib or flippant remarks. Memories appear rich and vivid.
50	Sitting on top of the world, "a free human being," normal inhibitions practically cut off, takes personal and social liberties of all sorts as impulse prompts. Long-winded enlarging on past exploits. Can "lick anybody in the county," but has observable difficulty in lighting a match. Marked blunting of self-criticism.
70	Feelings of remoteness. Odd sensations on rubbing the hands together, or on touching the face. Rapid, strong pulse and breathing. Amused at his own clumsiness or rather at what he takes to be the perversity of things about him. Asks others to do things for him. Upsets chair on rising.
100	Staggers very perceptibly. Talks to himself. Has difficulty in finding and putting on his overcoat. Fumbles long with the keys in unlocking and starting his car. Feels drowsy, sings loudly, complains that others don't keep on their side of the road.
200	Needs help to walk or to undress. Easily angered. Shouts, groans, and weeps by turns. Has nausea and poor control of urination. Cannot recall with whom he spent the evening.
300	In a stuporous condition, very heavy breathing, sleeping and vomiting by turns. No comprehension of language. Strikes wildly at the person who tries to aid him.
400	Deep anesthesia, may be fatal.

TABLE IV—*Some companies which offer alcohol rehabilitation programs for employees:*

Allis-Chalmers Corp.	Illinois Central Gulf RR Co.
Aluminum Co. of America	International Telephone & Telegraph Corp.
American Cyanamid Co.	Kaiser Steel Corp.
Armco Steel Corp.	Kelsey-Hayes Co.
Bemis Co., Inc.	

Bethlehem Steel Corp.	Kemper Corp.
Boeing Co.	Kennecott Copper Corp.
Burlington Northern, Inc.	Lever Brothers Co.
Caterpillar Tractor Co.	Marsh & McLennan, Inc.
Cone Mills Corp.	Mead Corp.
Corning Glass Works	Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc.
Deere & Co.	Metropolitan Life Ins. Co.
E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co.	Minnesota Mining & Mfg. Co.
Eastman Kodak Co.	New York Times Co.
Employers Ins. of Wausau	New York Transit Authority
Equitable Life Assur. Society of the U. S.	Olin Corp.
Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.	Pfizer, Inc.
Ford Motor Co.	Pitney-Bowes, Inc.
General Dynamics Corp.	Prudential Ins. Co. of Amer.
General Electric Co.	Public Service Electric & Gas Co. (New Jersey)
General Motors Corp.	Raytheon Co.
Hercules, Inc.	R. J. Reynolds Industries, Inc.
Honeywell, Inc.	Scoville Mfg. Co.
Hughes Aircraft Co.	Union Carbide Corp.
	Union Pacific RR
	United California Bank
	Western Electric Co., Inc.

TABLE V—*Agencies*

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
Telephone listing your area
Secretary, Alcoholics Anonymous
P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, New York 10017
Telephone (212) 686-1100
Al-Anon
For relatives of alcoholics Contact AA for locations
Al Teens
For children of alcoholics Contact AA for locations
National Council of Alcoholism (NCA)
Confidential referral for consultants
160 Councils across the country
Telephone: (301) 527-7800
National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAA)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852
Telephone: (301) 443-2954
The American Medical Society on Alcoholism (AMSA)
Dr. Frank A. Serpas, Medical Director
National Council on Alcoholism
Suite 1720, 2 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016
Telephone: (212) 889-3160
North American Association of Alcoholism Programs (NAAAP)
1130 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Rutgers Center for Alcohol Studies
Center for Alcohol Studies
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903
Utah School of Alcohol Studies
Director
University of Utah School of Alcohol Studies
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112
State Commissions on Alcoholism
State Departments of Health, Welfare, or Mental Health

What About Women Educational Directors?

Ninety-two percent of those responding to *Mission's* RSVP said, "Yes"—*women should be used as educational directors if qualified*. The question was asked not only in the light of the role of women currently involved in the life of the church, but also because a few women are obtaining graduate religion degrees from Church of Christ-related institutions. Can their training and talents be used in this way? Some of the replies follow.

Several answers dealt with biblical principles involved. *Mike Vantine* of Spokane, Washington, said, "Paul's rule of thumb seemed to be that women should be as involved as men without scandalizing the culture," and *Bruce Wooley* of Stephenville, Texas, said that he knew of no scriptural reason to think otherwise. *Thurman E. Ward* of Goldendale, Washington, felt that a woman in such a role, not involving the worship, would be proper: "There is no usurpation of authority where a woman is appointed by the elders or church leaders."

Kay Crawford Jackson of Memphis, Tennessee, herself a Master of Divinity graduate, held that "before someone objects on the grounds that we don't find any women in that capacity in the New Testament," we should recognize that neither are song leaders, personal work specialists, or educational directors—of either sex.

Dissenting views, however, also appealed to the Bible. Said *Richard H. Hollerman* of Fort Worth, Texas: "A woman educational director would most certainly 'direct' males which would entail 'exercising authority' over

them. This is clearly forbidden by Paul's inspired pronouncement (1 Tim. 2:12)." *Lynn M. Mason* of Lubbock, Texas, approved of women as educational directors but noted that their effectiveness might be greater in pre-school, primary, and junior high levels. "Women are more attuned to the needs of these ages and have better knowledge of how and what they should be taught," he said.

Other responses emphasized the use of talents, without regard to sexuality. "I believe it is high time we utilized our women's talents and abilities in this very critical area," said *Robert S. Rash*, an elder in Riverside, California, "We have used them successfully in non-paying educational directorship roles," he added, "and it's about time we used them and paid them." *Karen Mosman* of Austin, Texas, noted that "God doesn't give talents to be buried, and our sex is not a good excuse for burying talents and creativity. . . . If she can handle such a task, a woman should be encouraged to do the job—any job."

One reason we limit the use of women's talents is that we associate their

work with formalities such as church buildings and "proper" worship services, according to *Cal Downs*, of Lawrence, Kansas. If we could rid ourselves of that mentality "each person would be free to serve God with whatever talents he has given that individual," Downs said.

Longer notes worth noting—*Martha Haynes*, Dallas, Texas: "Why stop with the question of whether a woman could fill a role as educational director? It is totally incongruous to apply limitations of 'partial' or 'semi-equality' to any area of employment in which a woman is *qualified* to serve. As Sarah Francis Anders put it, 'Sexism so permeates our churches that men and women alike have been brainwashed to think that male/female is an ordained dualism as polar as God/Satan.'"

And *Richard Schramm* of Dallas, Texas: "The question in 1977 as to whether women should be admitted into the church's male leadership hierarchy is akin to the question in 1954 as to whether blacks should have been admitted into white public schools. . . . The position of educational director should be made available to any qualified Christian, regardless of sex, who feels called by God to exercise this talent. . . . I am frankly embarrassed that all the talented women I know in Churches of Christ are not allowed to contribute to the church except through the nursery, children's Sunday school, or fellowship dinners. How would we men feel if these were the only jobs which the women allowed us to do?"

Morality vs. Moralism in Politics

By PERRY C. COTHAM

"Moralizing is not an excess of morality, but a deficiency of morality, the lack of either intelligence or honesty."—Robert Gordis

Today's Christian is frequently—and rightly—urged to vote and act in accordance with his moral values. Certainly the Bible gives a clear mandate for the Christian to seek justice and fairness for others. Thus, the political process becomes more than an arena for resolving social conflicts and making laws. It is a way to establish justice in a sinful world.

Too often, however, injecting Christian morality into politics degenerates into moralism. What is meant by this term? What is the difference between moralism and morality? And why is the latter to be affirmed, while the former is to be avoided?

I

Moralism is a cheap imitation of morality. It is a mind-set that demands morality on the basis of altruism instead of admitting one's own self-interest. Moralism is an attitude that often confuses moral issues with personalities, and lesser issues with substantive. And it is a bias that frequently fosters a sense of moral superiority and self-righteousness.

According to Gene Rainey, moralism involves phrasing problems and their solutions in theological terms instead of the essential language of politics. Terms such as "compromise," "pressure," and "persuasion" are avoided, and value judgments abound

Dr. Perry C. Cotham, preaching minister for the Westwood Church of Christ in McMinnville, Tennessee, formerly taught in the department of history and political science at David Lipscomb College.

(*Kerygma* 1:1, p. 21). For Paul Tillich, moralism is a negative attitude toward life which distorts the moral imperative into an oppressive law (*Theology of Culture*, p. 133).

Moralism has a preference for style over substance. For example, consider the church leaders who were relatively undisturbed and even quite defensive of the Watergate scandal, until the transcripts were released. Then they discovered that the President frequently resorted to profanity, and only then did many of them drop their defense. In the twentieth century there has been a notable difference in the issues selected for moral crusading among the various Protestant churches. Conservative Christians are politically active against pornography, sexual obscenity, horse-racing, gambling, liquor-by-the-drink, and, more recently, the Equal Rights Amendment. Yet they have been comparatively silent regarding the morality of the Vietnam war, the My Lai massacre, and human rights.

Selective political morality is also obvious among liberal churchmen in the political arena. They have been active in ending racial discrimination, agitating for voting rights and open housing, and against war. But the liberal preoccupation with social morality has led some to excessive involvement in partisan politics. And they have neglected to observe that matters of individual piety do indeed relate to Christian living and help shape public morality. The emphasis of each group is needed, but not to the exclusion of the other.

In reaction to moralism, some political scientists want to discard the categories of good and evil. They would substitute an amoral politics of power, influence, authority, and precedent. They say that on most bread-and-butter issues all the religious rhetoric about justice, truth, and beauty falls on deaf ears. Religious reformers are well-intentioned amateurs who obscure issues, this analysis continues.

Actually, revulsion against moralism's special pleading and distortion should be the first step to a more realistic and sensitive understanding of morality. This understanding should acknowledge that a value-free society is impossible. Those who pretend to make political decisions on a value-free basis are self-deceived. Man is a moral being, as Aristotle taught us, and he cannot escape moral judgments. The answer to moralism is not the avoidance of moral choices. A better approach is to re-

cognize the pitfalls into which moralism is always in danger of stumbling.

II

First, political moralism thwarts genuine morality by disguising the moralist's own power base and self-interest. The greater the involvement of a political actor in a conflict situation, the more likely he is to conceal the true nature of his political action behind the mask of transcendent values. Power-holders have a resilient tendency to deceive themselves about the true nature of their decisions by referring to their action not in terms of power but of legal or moral principles.

Jesus recognized that "doing good" is a claim that the powerful make for themselves. Those who exercise authority over others allow themselves to be called benefactors (Luke 22:25). Even the most persistently self-seeking individuals hide sin and self-interest behind the curtain of great values, noble concepts, and quotable slogans. For example, a full-page newspaper ad labels pornographer Larry Flynt as "the American dissident," inviting comparison with Russian intellectuals who risked life, health, and family fellowship in attempting to exercise a right Americans often take for granted.

The thrust of biblical theology is clear: man cannot help but sin when he acts in relation to his fellowman. He may be able to minimize his injustice but he cannot escape it. No one can completely transcend self-interest. Nor can political action be completely divorced from the taint of egotism which, as pride or self-deception, claims for the sponsor more than his due.

Vital criticism of Christian political action on this ground began in 1932 with Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Niebuhr challenges us to examine again our concept of sin. The Christian must realize that sin is located not merely in man's desire to do evil. It is found as well in his in-

ability to make purely unselfish decisions and in his infirmity of judgment and perception of antagonists.

Niebuhr's theme is particularly relevant in the ethical critique of institutions. Justice cannot be considered apart from the involvement of institutions. Human character and motives do mold the policy and image of social and political institutions, and one must not discount the leavening influence of individual virtue. But institutions have a character and personality all their own. One person plus another can become something entirely distinct from the sum of its parts, with the power to influence all who are affected by corporate life.

When people are secure in their work with large institutions, personal accountability loses its sharpness and is diffused across the group. People who are scrupulously honest and fair in personal affairs may easily find satisfaction in pressing corporate advantage without the slightest recognition of any inconsistency. Doubtful and even corrupt practices, when institutionalized and conventionalized, obtain a subtle kind of unchallenged legitimacy. When such become SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), and "everybody" does it, few raise questions or resist. Yet, if this philosophy finds total acceptance in political and legal institutions, it will, like an unchecked cancer, gradually destroy democratic government. One responsibility of the church is to call democratic institutions back to their public function—the stewardship of common good and the instrumentality of public justice.

A second danger of moralism grows out of the moralist's disdain for political ambiguity and compromise. This pitfall is the tendency toward an oversimplified, two-valued orientation. There is an obvious, fundamental difference between right and wrong, this doctrine holds. The right must be supported, the wrong must be suppressed. Error and evil have no rights against the truth. Restoration to truth and righteousness is through the removal of evil men from places of power and the return of good men to assume their positions. The battle lines are drawn and the final result will be victory for the right. Cooperation among the "good guys" is acceptable, but compromise with the enemy is always a sell-out.

But great political questions are seldom if ever morally simple. Issues such as war or depression impinge intensely upon the consciousness and livelihood of even the least politically motivated citizens, and the human tendency is to perceive such issues in terms of a single moral principle. We disdain moral complexity and long for the comfort of passive simplicity.

The wise leader or citizen is aware that not all principles and values can be served at once. He is familiar with the moral dilemma, when there seems



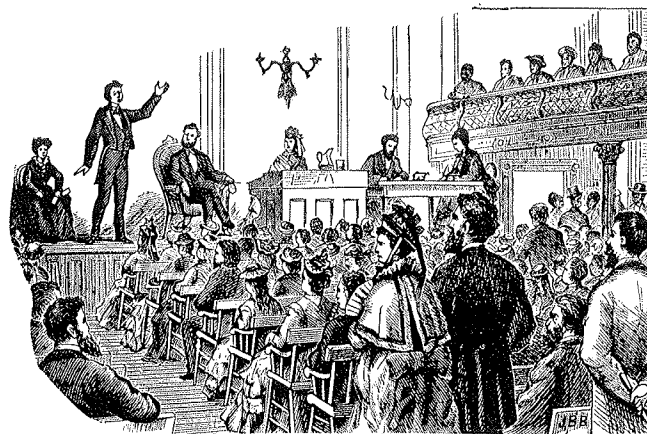
to be no overriding moral criterion by which a conflict can be adjudicated. For example, few thoughtful persons are *for* abortion. Most would agree that even if an abortion seems necessary, it is in some sense tragic, with or without legal sanction. But the call for a constitutional amendment banning abortion touches on several moral and practical issues, a fact that does not lend this issue to simplistic slogans and battlecries.

The Civil War is another classic case in point. Recall Lincoln's anguish over two morally relevant objectives—the preservation of the Union and the abolition of slavery. The maintenance of the then fragile Union was, in his view, the greater good. And while this decision was deemed a “cop-out,” to borrow modern jargon, by the radical abolitionist, it was a wise one in light of Lincoln's primary concern for the national interest. There is no serious ethical flaw in his reasoning if one concedes the premise that he could not achieve all worthy goals simultaneously. In the clash of valid morals and conflicting perspectives we must recall Niebuhr's aphorism: “In my truth is bound to be some error; in his error, some truth.”

Particularly deplorable is the notion that unless absolute victory can be attained, the battle is not worth the Christian's involvement. Emil Brunner compared justice to a straight line; everyone has a concept of what one should be, but in reality a perfectly straight line does not exist. Similarly, perfect justice cannot be achieved by imperfect man. The quality of justice realized in a sinful world will remain less than ideal; but the struggle for approximate justice can be successful. Is not half a loaf better than no bread at all? The Scriptures teach that we shall be judged less by degree of success than by faithfulness to duty.

The premise that individual moral character in seats of power is the key to political justice also needs careful reconsideration. Lincoln Steffens portrayed the incredible irrelevance and ineptitude of a number of political reform groups, many of whom were inspired by religious zeal. Their failures at reform did not grow out of a lack of idealism, honesty, or perseverance. They grew, rather, out of the naive notion that social injustice could be eradicated by changing the names and motivations of leaders. Steffens noted that when voters ousted a “corrupt” boss and replaced him with an “honest man” without altering the social conditions which created opportunities for corruption, then corruption merely surfaced through new channels.

Perhaps many Americans had still not caught this point by the mid-'70s. The easiest way to account for the Watergate scandals is to blame Richard



Nixon and his aids. There is little doubt that their individual flaws were considerable. But a fallacy in this position is that blaming individuals diverts attention from institutional weaknesses that create occasions for political corruption.

Neither is Christian morality aided by becoming obsessively concerned with the motives of individual public officials. A democratic system can work well enough if we concern ourselves only with what an office holder stands for publicly, and with whether he has the capacity for carrying out these policies. History shows no exact and necessary correlation between the quality of motives and the quality of public policy, on either the foreign or the domestic front.

This is true in both political and moral terms. We cannot conclude that good intentions in a statesman will result in public policy that is either morally desirable or politically just. Good motives, to the extent we are convinced of their presence, can only give assurance against deliberately bad policies. They cannot insure the political success or moral goodness of the specific policies they inspire. How often have politicians sought a goal for purely selfish ambitions, and consequently achieved worthwhile accomplishments for special groups or for the nation at large? And how often have statesmen been motivated by the desire to improve the world or reform the nation, and ended by making it worse?

The Bible makes it clear that God is as concerned with results as he is with intentions. He cares about what happens in history. Especially in the Old Testament, his dealings with the sons of men did not relate to morality as an end in itself, but with morality as a means by which they might more completely effect God's will on earth. In the process of manifesting his will to his chosen people, God did not hesitate to use men and women of mixed motives and character. Must we imagine that, despite the individual greatness and commitment of Moses, that God cared more about the personal virtues of this chosen leader than he did about the liberation

of his people?

Moralism also corrupts language; and corruption of language leads to corruption of thought and attitudes. Irving Kristol has noted that there have been two traditions in American public address. One is the prophetic-utopian tradition, which has always been the more popular. The other is the constitutional-legal tradition which has supplied the rhetoric for official occasions and official government business. The latter tradition appears in presidential messages, debates in Congress, treaties, and Supreme Court decisions.

The further we move away in time from the founding fathers, the more our rhetoric about foreign affairs has moved from the founders' sensible, realistic, and forthright approach. Speeches are windier, lofty, high-flown. Doubletalk has been the accepted jargon for American politics. John Kennedy's

one of the most destructive elements of twentieth century communism. Communists have believed that they alone have the key to history and the only program for human betterment and all opponents are but obstacles to be removed or rendered impotent. Unfortunately, this has many parallels in our own politics.

Biblical morality requires that all humans—and that includes legislators, judges, prosecutors, diplomats, reformers, and voters—practice and display restraint and genuine humility. In criminal justice, for example, society can measure only such externals as the harm of an act. It can move to reduce occasions for its recurrence. But no mere mortal can know infallibly the extent of another's moral responsibility for a criminal act, nor how to decide upon a penalty of deprivation and suffering within the limits of that moral responsibility. God alone is

**The danger is that political moralism ends up
in fanaticism; and the fanatic 'does what he thinks the Lord would
do if he only knew the facts in the case.'**

inaugural commitment for America to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, or oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of liberty" is an example of such loftiness. Encouragingly, there is evidence that the current political rhetoric is returning to a practical appraisal of realities.

The most serious consequence of moralism is that it perpetuates a sense of moral superiority or self-righteousness. Such pride generally goes hand-in-hand with the worst kind of hypocrisy. While political moralists convert their standards and their stances on current issues into moral absolutes, their opponents are characterized not simply as politically mistaken or unwise, but as immoral. The truth is the sole possession of one party of thought or of one candidate. Particularly if a "thus saith the Lord" can be attached to partisan policies, minds may be closed to alternative policies proposed by their less righteous opponents.

Moral absolutism may wreak havoc at any point along the political spectrum. Partisanship toward the right or the left is idolatrous to the degree it removes prophetic self-criticism. The omnipresent danger is that political moralism ends up in fanaticism; and the fanatic, as Dr. Dooley put it, "does what he thinks th' Lord wud do if He only knew th' facts in th' case." There can be no greater ruthlessness than that of the powerful who are absolutely certain that they alone know what is best for themselves and others and, possessing this coveted key to peace and justice, feel a God-given responsibility to impose their will on others. This has been

our judge, for only he knows the secret motives and purposes of the heart (Heb. 4:12-13). Only God can separate the wheat from the tares—an act reserved for the final judgment (Matt. 13:24-30). Jesus' familiar words, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1) are among various biblical warnings against self-righteous pride and moral condemnation of others.

III

Perhaps being aware of these dangers of political moralism is three-fourths of the battle for its elimination. Certainly the risk of moralism should not persuade us to abandon the quest for political justice. It is fashionable now to admit the difficulty, if not outright impossibility, of applying individual kingdom ethics to the intractable problems of national and international justice. But there is no defense for suspending the great virtues of the Christian faith—humility, self-criticism, and charity—when advancing reform.

Faithfulness in this world means that the Christian joins with others in the continuing struggle for justice. His proclamation of the good news is preceded and authenticated by specific deeds and decisions that humanize truth and energize moral idealism. The ultimate test of morality in American political life is not solely the values and ideals we proclaim, but what we have the ability and courage to carry out. The Christian political activist should never forget the admonition of an Old Testament prophet: "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). †

FORUM

The Faith to Doubt

Often we read about the experience of Christians who have mountaintop experiences coupled with valleys of doubt and despair (re: Lanny Hunter, "When God Is Not There, and Is Silent," October, 1977). But that is not my experience. I grew up under the guidance of a grandmother and mother who love the Lord, who continually found ways to serve others in teaching and helping, and who read the Bible with their arms warmly around me.

Thus there has been a scarcity of doubt in my life. God is always there, and he is never silent. My faith problems lie on the other end of the spectrum, i.e., in not having enough faith to doubt. It is easy for me to believe that because I feel no doubt that I therefore have the right answers. The doubter does not become complacent in his faith. But complacency of mind and emotion is continually my bane. To have assurance that God is here is joyful and peace-producing, but it is also possible to fall into the trap that caught Israel. They cried, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace. They relied on their present views of God to sustain them, and God cried out through the prophets that he was not like that at all.

I am aware of many Christians who suffer the ups and downs of confidence and despair, but I suspect there may be in Churches of Christ more who are like me. We are often content to stay on the plateau where we are, rather than stretch for higher ground. We are the complacent elderships who fire preachers when controversy arises. We are the complacent Bible class teachers who never read anything but the Bible (and seldom it) for fear that our cherished ideas will be overturned. We are the complacent preachers who do not speak what we have come to believe because life has become so com-

fortable. We are the complacent Christians who follow the already established routine because the resurrection faith of the early disciples would cost us a great deal.

He who is not changed daily is not bearing a cross, not taking on divine nature, not doubting the faith he now holds, not keeping himself from idols. We could use a little more doubt.

Charles Coulston
Redwood City, Calif.

Cynical Editorial

The cynicism of October's "Cross Currents" is almost unbelievable. You have said, in effect, "Those who have formed opinions different from mine have done so through arbitrary decisions, made under pressure from financial, social, and cultural forces. Mine, on the other hand, are based upon a correct understanding of God's eternal will." One who does not share your presuppositions concerning the value and influence of dances as entertainment, church ownership of Christian colleges, the authority of elders, and the nature of "called-out" behavior must disagree with some of your implications.

But I am also surprised that you would attempt to divorce Christian behavioral ethics from those of society. Is there really no difference between the degree of acceptance of alcohol now and that of Jesus' day (watch the snickers whenever it is even mentioned on the "Tonight" show)? Is "American Bandstand" comparable to the Red Sea celebration? The answers are, of course, no, no, and no. And you, of course, agree. But as you do, you are being slightly inconsistent with the thrust of your treatise.

Part of our new covenant with the Father deals with our relationship with him, the Unchangeable. But past also deals with our relationships with those

around us; and as society changes, our roles and duties change. Although these changes might appear to be forced upon us by a changing society, they are actually required of us by our covenant because of a changing society. When we forget how others view us, we forget part of our duty.

Clifton L. Ganus III
Searcy, Arkansas

Beware of Negativism

I enjoy *Mission* magazine. The variety of articles makes each issue worthwhile even if there are some articles which are not especially timely or appealing to me.

It seems you need to be constantly aware of your leaning toward negativism in an attempt to bring about renewal. The negative grows old and non-encouraging; the positive encourages change and growth. I pray God's wisdom for you and your contributors that you may consistently speak a word from the Lord which is both a message of judgment and grace, of sharp criticism and glorious hope.

At the same time, I must say I truly appreciate "the other side of the coin" which *Mission* often presents; for example, as in "When God Is Not There, and Is Silent." Balance is sorely needed in this chaotic, subjective age.

I request permission to use in its entirety the article by Jim Reynolds, "The Onlookers" (October 1977). It is a piece which says more than it has stated, but not likely more than it was intended to say—about life, the church, values, etc. I would like to reprint this in our weekly church paper.

Thank you for your contribution to thought and renewal.

Georges P. Carillet
Snellville, Georgia

Insults, not Satire

Balaam's Friend would likely be bewildered by the cavalcade of insults masquerading as satire in Dave Wimbish's article "What's \$23 Million Between Billy Graham and God?" After all, isn't satire supposed to convey a message? The only message conveyed was the writer's penchant for dropping names. The "fairness" he demonstrates by taking a shot at Foy Wallace as well as at Graham is not sufficient reason for ever allowing Wimbish's tasteless essay to leave the back pew.

Larry Caillouet
Bowling Green, Kentucky

MOMES

By ALLAN McNICOL

Oh God!, based on the novel by Avery Corman.
Directed by Carl Reiner. A Warner Bros. film, with
main actors George Burns and John Denver.

Guest reviewer: Michael Hall

Oh God! is a movie that has something intensely religious to say about the humanity of God. This fall (1977) release, with John Denver and George Burns, is riddled with deep theological truths and untruths. It cleverly and humorously concerns itself with such viable questions as the nature of faith; interpersonal relationships between believers and non-believers; and the decay and commercialism of organized religion. The movie excites and stimulates—and offends and repels.

The movie is replete with references to the deep “issues” of comparative religion. God is even quizzed with fifty questions (written in Aramaic) by a board of theologians and top religious leaders. The questions, however, are only partly taken seriously; primarily they are taken and answered with satire, humor, and nonchalance. An underlying motif of the picture is that God is not really interested in the same “issues” of the day as the clergy. His priorities are higher, more humane, more pivotal—they concern human needs!

The drama and dialogue raise questions about man’s free will, God’s control of the future, comparative religions, and God’s essential message. You’ll love and treasure some of the dialogue as delightful and terse; you’ll abhor other emphases as irrelevant or even sacrilegious.

But the essence of the film concerns God himself. He wants to reiterate his concern and love for the world; so he stages an interview with Jerry (Denver) and manifests himself as a Voice. Jerry, an assistant grocery store manager, is to spread the word to the world.

But there is a slight problem: Jerry isn’t a believer. Neither is he religious, nor does he have any church affiliation. “Neither do I” responds God! Jerry’s wife is really skeptical, believing that

he must be on the verge of an emotional collapse. She thinks he ought to see a doctor. She asks why God hasn’t appeared to him in person. Why was it just a Voice in the grocery store, on the car radio, in strange rooms?

That dialogue is the preparation for God’s personal appearance. The scene is the bathroom. Jerry is in the shower. Suddenly God speaks again and tells him that He is there in the bathroom, in person. With great trepidation, Jerry emerges from the shower to come face-to-face with God who has decided to manifest himself in the body and image of (get this!) George Burns! It is a choice moment when the camera slowly focuses on the physical form of George Burns. It scans him from head to foot. The spotlight is on him, seeing him through the eyes of Jerry. It pauses briefly to catch the baseball cap on his head, the thick plastic glasses on his nose, and the tennis shoes on his feet.

God is in Jerry’s bathroom, dressed in tennis shoes! He manifests himself in a human form, in a manner that Jerry could comprehend. What a delightful and refreshing way of communicating the incarnational truth which underlines the biblical message about Jesus!

Later, in the grocery store, God shows up for a talk. When Jerry tries to expose God by introducing him to a couple of lady shoppers, God changes his form—to that of a rather large, black lady! I doubt that Jerry was the only person to gape at that surprising development. What a shock!

To think of God actually, literally, physically coming in a human form is difficult enough. But to complicate that with an unfamiliar or (to some people) an unacceptable human form—a woman, a black, fat person! Well, that nearly strains the limits of credibility. (Maybe that’s why Jesus so

shocked the church leaders of his time. After all, they expected the Messiah to be almost anything *but* a carpenter from Nazareth. To them, Jesus was but a country hick with a low-cast job, without any college degree, and from a ghetto town!)

Toward the end of the movie, there is a courtroom scene in which Jerry is on trial for libel. On God’s instructions, he had interrupted a campaign and accused a profiteering, evangelical, big-name preacher of getting rich from his religion. The evidence is amassed against Jerry. It suggests that he was insane since he went around claiming to have seen and talked to God.

To prove Jerry’s insanity, the lawyer quizzes Jerry as to what this God that appears to him looks like. He answers that God last appeared as a bus-boy. Well, with that, the lawyers and the court explode. “God, a bus-boy?” That brings the house down in laughter.

Once again, the symbolism is suggestive. For when God actually came in the person of Jesus, he came as a carpenter. He got on his knees and washed the disciples feet. He journeyed as an itinerant preacher. His position was as lowly and service-oriented as a bus-boy!

The God of this imaginary, parabolic story played by George Burns has a very calm, non-threatening, nonchalant voice. His manner is kind, thoughtful, and humorous. He laughs. But there is also an urgency in his concern for where mankind is heading; an intensity and seriousness in his love and care. He doesn’t like it that men take him for granted, kill each other, pollute and corrupt his world, and ignore his rules for getting along with each other.

The movie isn’t without its faults, but the essence of its message is sound. It’s a kind of twentieth-century parable; an imaginary story of the incarnational truth of the Good News of how God cares and manifested himself. Perhaps more than any other thing, it underscores the unbelievable and exciting truth of the humanity of God.

I like the idea that millions of people will be seeing this imaginative story and may be challenged to do some in-depth thinking about spiritual things—particularly the humanity of God. And if the Body of Christ is ready and capable of communicating the Good News in such a positive, contemporary, and realistic way, we might have something viable and winsome to say about Jesus Christ.

†

← CROSS CURRENTS →

YES, SANTA, THERE
REALLY IS A VIRGINIA

Newspapers this year are re-running the classic editorial in which a benign editor assures a young inquirer that as long as there is love, there really will be a Santa Claus. At the risk of blaspheming what has become by now sacred lore, another point needs to be made.

The millions of us who play Santa need also to be assured that there really are more millions of "Virginias" and others who are having anything but a merry Christmas. The brute fact of widespread poverty and starvation is, as our Lord promised, still with us.

Why interrupt the merriment of Christmas to remind us of what we already know? Because without such reminders the season degenerates either into bland sentiment or flashy tinsel. Christmas speaks of what the church ought to be doing about such problems as world hunger. The babe-in-the-manger story is not about the cute cuddliness of the Christ-child. It is about the pain—if also the joy—of *incarnation*. It is about a God of love not being content to define that passion in merely sentimental terms. It is about "Joy to the world" taking on flesh—and with it, the hunger and sorrow and deprivation of the Virginias of the world.

But even recited in that way, the Christmas story remains at the level of soft sentiment without the church. Here is the Body of Christ, continuing incarnate even after the Ascension. It is the Body who is now elected to continue to gift the world with the message that God cares. It is our joyful task not only to *proclaim*

"Peace on earth," but to *enflesh* that benevolent idea.

And the Christmas basket mentality is not enough. We would not deny the needy these crumbs from our laden tables. But we would ask whether that meager gesture signals *enfleshed* love so much as our own uneasy consciences.

To measure incarnate love, let the Body ask the larger question of its total investment in Christmas. Let us ask how enmeshed we have become in the nets of slick advertising that entice our spending at this season. Let us expose the hypocrisy which bemoans the rising cost of living and the shrunken dollar, while setting new spending records at the department stores. Let us evaluate the electronic gadgets and games and gimmicks we buy in the light of their drain on the world's energy resources—and against the value of the Virginias who died while we made the purchase.

Our fallen world is too bent for us to fulfill the dream of idealistic agronomists—the rich (not only here but in oil-rich Arab nations as well) *could* feed the poor, but we *will* not. Yet this fact of mere life must not deter the Body from sharing in deed and word the message of the *abundant* life, that God was manifest not in the wealth and splendor of kings but in the poverty of a stable.

And yes, Santa, as long as there is a fallen world, as long as there is greed in the hearts of persons, there will always be a Virginia. Visit her this Christmas.

—RD



1710 W. Airport Freeway
Irving, Texas 75062



coming next month:

Michael Hall speaks to both the strength and the risk of non-creedal religious groups, in 'The Inalienable Right of Dissent.'

Luther Davis describes the story of Jonah in terms of a TV news report.

Wayne Willis writes of the healing force of a grateful heart, in 'Clean Sheets and Ice Water.'

And Wes Reagan's contribution to 'Renewal in the Pulpit' asks if the church must continue to make it so tough on its 'prophets' that they have to leave the fold.